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The Rural Isolated Task Force is a technical assistance project administered by the Division of Equal Education Opportunities. Southern, rural majority Negro school systems (242) have been cut off from Federal aid. The proposed Task Force will survey and make plans to ameliorate the educational problems of such school systems. Titles I and III of the ESEA are primary projected sources of support. (EM)

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A COORDINATED APPROACH TO IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN MAJORITY NEGRO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Federal funds for education have increased substantially over the last few years. These funds are made available through various legislative titles, administered by separate program offices -- often different government agencies -- and all have unique requirements, guidelines and conditions for application. The U. S. Office of Education, alone, administers more than one hundred separate programs to aid in the education of the nation's citizens.

Few of these programs are carried out entirely by the federal government. Most are partnerships which depend upon the active cooperation and initiative of state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, nongovernmental organizations, and individual Americans. This paper will highlight the technical assistance efforts of one project initiated by the U. S. Office of Education to enhance a partnership designed to improve educational opportunities in rural-isolated school districts with a majority Negro student population in the seventeen southern and border states.

During Congressional hearings, the last two years, many comments were received as to the need for establishing a program of technical assistance for small schools in rural areas in order that federal assistance under

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the various statutes could be brought to bear to assist in the solution of education problems in rural school districts.[1]

During the same period of time, the program office within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare responsible for administering Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 expressed concern over the fact that approximately fifty per cent of the school systems whose federal funds had been terminated for noncompliance with the Act were rural, isolated and majority Negro.[2] It was obvious that federal funds were being denied those school systems that had the most severe educational problems.

In early 1968, a number of task forces were set up in the Office of Education in response to the interests of the Congress. The Division of Equal Educational Opportunities assumed the responsibility for rendering increased technical assistance to rural isolated school systems and to assist majority Negro school systems in improving educational opportunities, as these school districts desegregated to remain in compliance with the law. The mission of this task force is to bring as many resources as possible to bear on educational problems of rural, isolated, majority Negro school systems.

The thrust of task force activities took the following direction during the remainder of the 1968 fiscal year. Approximately 242 school districts in seventeen southern and border states were identified as being rural, isolated and comprised of student populations that are predominantly

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[1]U. S. Congress, Senate, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1967, 90th Cong., 1st Sess., 1967 Report, November 6, 1967, pp. 50.

[2]Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs.

Negro. It was apparent that these districts had pressing basic educational problems and presented a unique problem in the struggle for equality of education as defined within the scope of school desegregation. Experience has indicated that, as school systems are desegregated, students are afforded "more equal" educational opportunities. However, in most of these 242 systems, because of the high majority of Negro students, desegregation would not change the racial composition of the schools significantly and their education programs might not improve sufficiently.

As a basis for planning improvements in the quality of education in such systems, surveys were made of six pilot districts in the states of Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The surveys were made by personnel from seven University Desegregation Centers.[3] Such Centers are funded under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, administered by the Division of Equal Education Opportunity, USOE.

Results of the surveys were reported at a meeting attended by representatives of the three state departments of education, the participating local education agencies, university desegregation centers, and representatives from the Southeastern Education Laboratory. An assessment was made of the most pressing educational needs of each school system. Once the needs were assessed, this partnership of educators

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[3]Participating Desegregation Centers are located at the following universities:

Auburn University	University of South Alabama
University of Georgia	University of South Carolina
University of Miami	Univ. of Southern Mississippi

University of Tennessee

agreed to develop, cooperatively, more vigorous education programs for each school district. New projects were developed in the following areas:

1. In-service training for teachers
2. Preschool training
3. Follow-through activities
4. Communication skills development
5. Remedial reading
6. Drop out prevention
7. Organizational strategies

Cooperative effort among the agencies involved resulted in the development of comprehensive plans for resolving educational problems in five of the participating school districts.[4] The comprehensive plan involved the use of funds from many sources and for a variety of purposes. Funds were made available under Title IV of the Elementary snd Secondary Education Act and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act to the Southeastern Education Laboratory to help such districts develop new projects and more effectively apply for Federal funds. A series of summer institutes for teachers and administrators was conducted at the University of Georgia and supported by Title XI of the National Defense Education Act. Consultative services were made available from seven universities under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act. New education projects implemented by the school systems last fall were supported by Titles I and III of ESEA. The Southeastern Education Laboratory also provides

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[4]One school district was found ineligible to participate for failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A list of participating school systems and programs being conducted is included as Appendix A.

continuing technical assistance to the local education agencies and assists in project evaluation. As a result of this pilot effort, many other school systems have expressed a desire to participate.

The goal of the Rural Isolated Task Force during fiscal year 1969 is to assist 100 additional school systems in improving their education programs in fall, 1969. To successfully implement the projects, it is proposed that 2500 teachers and other school personnel will be trained at nine universities in the summer of 1969. Funds for the training will be made available under the Education Professions Development Act and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act. The Bureau of Educational Personnel Development, USOE, recently announced awards to nine universities to conduct this training. Participating institutions are:

University of Georgia
University of Oklahoma
University of South Alabama
University of Texas
University of Virginia
University of South Carolina
St. Augustine's College
University of Southern Mississippi
Tulane University

It is anticipated that many of the participating school systems will commit Title I funds or other resources to supplement this effort.

These new activities are eligible to be funded under Titles I and III ESEA. Assistance in project development will continue to be available from the Southeastern Education Laboratory. While Titles I and III of the ESEA will be the primary sources of project support, additional support will be sought from funds from the Headstart, Follow Through, Bilingual, and Drop Out Programs.

Plans for Fiscal Year 1970 include involving the remaining more than one hundred rural, isolated, majority Negro school systems in the activities. It is also proposed to add new members from federal government agencies, state government agencies, institutions of higher education and private sectors of our society to this partnership striving, cooperatively, to improve educational opportunities for all Americans.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School District	State	New Projects
Twiggs County	Georgia	1. Pre-school 2. Remedial reading 3. In-service training 4. Interpersonal relationships 5. Communication skills 6. Follow through
Fairfield County	South Carolina	1. Pre-school 2. Flexible scheduling for elementary grades 3. In-service training 4. Interpersonal relationships
Williamsburg	South Carolina	1. Pre-school 2. Remedial reading 3. In-service training 4. Communication skills development 5. Interpersonal relationships
Clairborne County	Mississippi	1. Pre-school 2. Remedial reading 3. Dropout prevention 4. In-service training 5. Interpersonal relationships
East Tallahatchie	Mississippi	1. Remedial reading 2. Innovations a. team teaching b. non-gradedness c. paraprofessionals 3. Follow through 4. In-service training 5. Interpersonal relationships